

# CPS Reform Watch

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## More Options for Safety

Achieving safety and permanency for children is the primary goal of the Child Protective Services system. Meeting this goal requires that case managers have various options for keeping the child safe, including keeping the child at home safely or, if that is not possible, being able to find the child a safe place to call home through their extended families or through a foster family.

The Department of Economic Security has implemented a variety of measures aimed at improving safety and permanency for children.

One of these is a pilot program to better support

kinship families. Forty percent of the children in out of home care are placed with relatives.

"Sometimes, we forget that the family member accepting the child into their home is in crisis, too," said Polly Pfeuffer, an Assistant Program Manager who is part of a pilot project to better support kinship families. "We see them as an aunt or a grandma willing to care for vulnerable children, but we don't always remember that they are a sister or a mother to the parents of



More options for keeping kids safe are being developed.

the child or that they are a person who perhaps has not had to parent a child with special needs."

Pfeuffer's program aims to make the transition to caring for children easier for kinship families.

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## Join the Team!

- Child Protective Services is looking for dedicated individuals committed to keeping children safe and strengthening families. To learn more about positions available and how to apply, please visit: [www.azstatejobs.gov](http://www.azstatejobs.gov).

## New, Veteran Workers Getting Expanded Training

The former foster youth share very different stories. One was adopted by a relative, finished school and is working on a college degree. The other was in 5 placements in 5 years, was never in one school long enough to have his

educational issues addressed and left his last placement on his 18th birthday with no plans and no place to go. These are depictions of the actual stories future caseworkers are now hearing as part of their training.

"The (alumni panel) was great!" one worker wrote in her evaluation. "I was touched by their emotions and experiences. I will always keep in mind what they said."

This response is common.

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## Foster Care Improvements Include More Homes, Better Training

On May 19, Phoenix's Heritage Square — a place usually focused on the area's past — became a symbol of hope for a better future when it hosted this year's Blue Ribbon Event.

Dozens of foster parents, case managers, licensing agency staff and community volunteers gathered to tie 10,000 blue ribbons representing the Arizona children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect on the trees of Heritage Square. Their aim: to call attention to the need for more foster homes and recognize those who provide care to our state's most vulnerable children.

Since December 2003, the Department of Economic Security — through its own efforts and those of community based agencies — has increased the number of foster homes available by almost 600 homes to serve 1,400 additional children. This tremendous growth, however, has not kept pace with the number of children who need homes.

A sub-committee of the Governor's Commission on Child Protective Services Reform has been working on strategies to build on recent successes and increase the foster home options available.

Among these strategies is a non-profit organization called Faith in Kids, which encourages people in faith communities to become foster parents and to support foster families and children in their neighborhoods.

The Department also is working to better coordinate the efforts of dozens of licensing agencies and volunteers statewide with one, consistent campaign to find foster families.

Through its Family to Family program, the Department also will do targeted recruitment of foster and adoptive families in the neighborhoods that

children live in. This will ensure that children are able to maintain relationships with their extended family members, friends and schools while issues of safety and permanency are being worked on.

Among other improvements to the

"We hear stories on the news or in our communities about children being hurt. Foster parents are those who heard the stories and took action!"

- Margaret Soberg, foster parent and licensing worker

foster care system are an increase in the base daily reimbursement rate and improved training.

Last year, the base rate was increased by \$7.50 per day per child. This year, the Legislature again raised the rate, by about \$2.56 per day per child. This change will go into effect after July 1.

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## In-home Services Model Being Developed District-by-District

Funding provided in the 2005 regular session for the hiring of 137 new CPS case managers will help Child Protective Services develop an in-home services model to keep children safe at home while family issues are addressed.

Each district will determine how best to use the staff allocated to them and

what their model will look like, based on the resources in that community.

"We are very excited to see this happening," CPS Program Administrator Janice Mickens said. "This is something that we feel has been missing from our

Each CPS district in Arizona will develop an in-home services model for their area.

programs—an option for keeping kids safe at home."

Hiring of the new staff will begin in July 2005. Mickens expects that every district will have an in-home services component developed by the end of the calendar year.

## Family to Family Starts Work With Family Group Decision-Making

With the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Department has been working to implement Family to Family. This initiative — with successes in Alabama, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Maryland — is built upon the belief that “the first and best partners in the difficult work of child welfare are the communities and neighborhoods from which children are coming in to care.”

Through implementation of this initiative, Arizona will make client

families, resource families, community-based organizations, service providers and faith communities part of efforts to keep children safe in their own neighborhoods, and wherever possible, in their own homes.

One aspect of this initiative is family group decision-making, in which biological families and other interested parties to a case — such as grandparents, friends, foster parents, faith leaders and community service

providers — are part of multi-disciplinary teams that include CPS. The teams work on placement decisions that allow children to remain at home, or at the very least in their home communities, while issues of safety are being addressed.

This aspect of the program is being implemented in one office, with two more joining them in the next several months.

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## AZ Joins Effort To Study Disproportionate Number of Minority Kids in Care

The Arizona Department of Economic Security's Division of Children, Youth and Families (DES-DCYF) has been asked to join a national group through Casey Family Programs to address the over-representation of children of color in the nation's child welfare system.

According to the National Data Analysis System (NDAS), children of color account for 41 percent of the U.S. population, but represent 59 percent

of the children involved in the nation's foster care system.

“We need to take a look at every aspect of the issue and identify the social, economic and organizational factors that are causing this” said Dolores Reid, DES-DCYF Deputy Assistant Director and the state's lead

on this project. “Only then can we craft strategies to ensure that all children have access to the services that will ensure their safety, permanency, and well-being.”

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## Training Improvements Made

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“Each case manager is affected differently by what they hear, but one thing is the same: they know the impact their attitudes and decisions have on the life of a child,” said Kris Reich, training administrator for Child Protective Services.

The panel session with former foster

youth is just one of many improvements made to the training received by new and on-going workers and supervisors. Among these are: more information on adult and child mental health; training on programs and services available to children and families and how those may be used to keep children safe;

use of case studies to review and discuss critical decisions; and, enhanced field training to better prepare and support workers as they begin working on actual cases. Supervisors also have received enhanced training in areas such as case planning and critical decision-making.

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## Foster Care Improvements

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The Department's new training curriculum will be implemented statewide within the year and includes a strong focus on shared parenting and covers areas such as: the role of the foster parent as a member of the treatment team; the importance of the birth parent and family involvement in a child's life; addressing the cultural and religious needs of a child in care; behavior management; resources and supportive services available to foster parents; and the impact of fostering on individual family members.

## Family to Family

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The families offered this are those where Child Protective Services has recently removed a child or is considering removing the child.

Other aspects of the program that deal with community partnering and the recruitment, training and support of foster and adoptive parents from the neighborhoods, will also be implemented.

## Options for Safety Growing

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Within 10 days of the child going to live with relatives, we will go to the home to explain the system, the services the child needs and the supports available to help the family," Pfeuffer said. "We also help them access any of those services if they don't know how to do so."

Other aspects of the program involve training CPS staff on the importance of kinship caregiver support and in building relationships with other state and community programs that may be able to help kinship care givers.

Other efforts to promote safety and permanency include: Family Connections, Family to Family and the development of an in-home services model within CPS.

Family Connections focuses on families at risk before they become involved with the child welfare

system. A team of DES staff representing areas such as family assistance, employment, child care, developmental disabilities and CPS, works with families at risk to identify strengths and goals and connects families to the resources they need in order to build on those strengths and provide a safe, stable living environment for their children. There are two such teams currently operating in Arizona. The Department anticipates eight more teams will be operating by the end of the calendar year.

The second effort is Family to Family. This concept involves children already involved with CPS. Biological families and other interested parties to a case – such as grandparents, friends or neighbors, faith leaders and community service providers – are part of multi-disciplinary teams that include CPS. The teams work on case

plans that allow children to remain at home, or at the very least in their home communities, while issues of safety are being addressed.

The third effort is the result of additional funding received in the 2005 legislative session for the hiring of 137.5 additional case managers. These positions will be dedicated almost exclusively to the development of an in-home services component at CPS. In this model, a child can remain at home as long as a detailed plan is put in place that describes actions the family needs to take to keep the child safe and provide a stable living environment for the child. Ensuring that the child remains safe, that the services the child and family need are identified and appropriately delivered, and that the family complies with the plan takes coordination and supervision, which will be provided by the in-home staff.